

Irwin (E.)
K.
B E D U K A H,

OR THE

S E L F - D E V O T E D.

A N

I N D I A N P A S T O R A L.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
SAINT THOMAS'S MOUNT.

OMNIA VINCIT AMOR. OVID.

L O N D O N :

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M.DCC.LXXVI.

in the ways of man-
poem of this nature
could rather provoke
to the praise of
he has surmounted the
himself of such
openly to avow
the great world
himself in having
and is
a Lady, whose
of virtue.



The first of these on the coast
generally pre-
vails.

T O
A L A D Y.

M A D A M,

I M A Y appear but little versed in the ways of mankind, by dedicating to a Lady a poem of this nature. An eulogium on conjugal faith would rather provoke laughter in a polite circle, than conduce to the praise of the unfashionable author. But as he has surmounted the greatest difficulty, in having unburthened himself of such obsolete sentiments, he is not ashamed openly to avow them : and, leaving the fair movers of the great world to make a jest of Morality, he consoles himself in having found an exception to the prevailing system ; and is happy in promising himself the smiles of a Lady, whose influence is only felt in the narrow sphere of virtue.

The scene of the following Pastoral lies on the coast of Coromandel, where the Gentoo religion generally prevails.

vails. That the custom of women burning themselves on the decease of their husbands is peculiar to the Gentooes, no one acquainted with the history of India can be a stranger. The motives which can tempt the tender sex to so great and dreadful a sacrifice, are fully explained in my Heroine's reply to her mother's entreaties; where, over and above the dictates of Affection, the dictates of Pride evidently appear to support her in the fiery trial. Nor is this so much to be wondered at, when we consider to what greater lengths our own countrywomen have been hurried to maintain Precedence: how often their virtue and reputation have been sacrificed at the shrine of Vanity: objects which ought surely to be more dear to them than life itself!

I have but one thing, Madam, more to premise, which a natural regard for my own labours will not allow me to omit. The General who in the disposition of his camp leaves any part of it unsecured, must take the consequence of the attack which his own presumption may encourage: so, should some sufficient critic inveigh against these sheets for bestowing Beauty and Grace on a poor Indian, they might incur ridicule, did not the author previously vindicate the description. Elegance of shape and symmetry of
feature

DEDICATION.

vii

feature are common to the Gentoo women, and among the superior ranks their complexions do not yield to those of the southern nations in Europe.

To you, Madam, I shall not attempt any apology. The homage due to Beauty will not give you less pleasure, tho' paid to another. A work that is addressed chiefly to the heart, must succeed with one never deaf to the voice of distress: and the pen employed in the cause of Virtue cannot fail of possessing your good wishes.

I have the honour to remain, with the highest esteem,

M A D A M,

Your very obedient

and devoted Servant

Fort St. George,
1st January, 1775.

EYLES IRWIN

feature are common to the Orient, women, and among
the superior ranks their complexion do not yield to that
of the Southern nations is French. I shall not attempt any apology.
The disadvantage to Beauty will not give you half the
pleasure, the pain to another. A work that is dedicated
chiefly to the heart, truly touched with one never dead
to the voice of duty, and the pen employed in the
cause of Virtue cannot fail of polluting your good
wishes.

I have the honour to remain, with the highest esteem,

M A D A M,

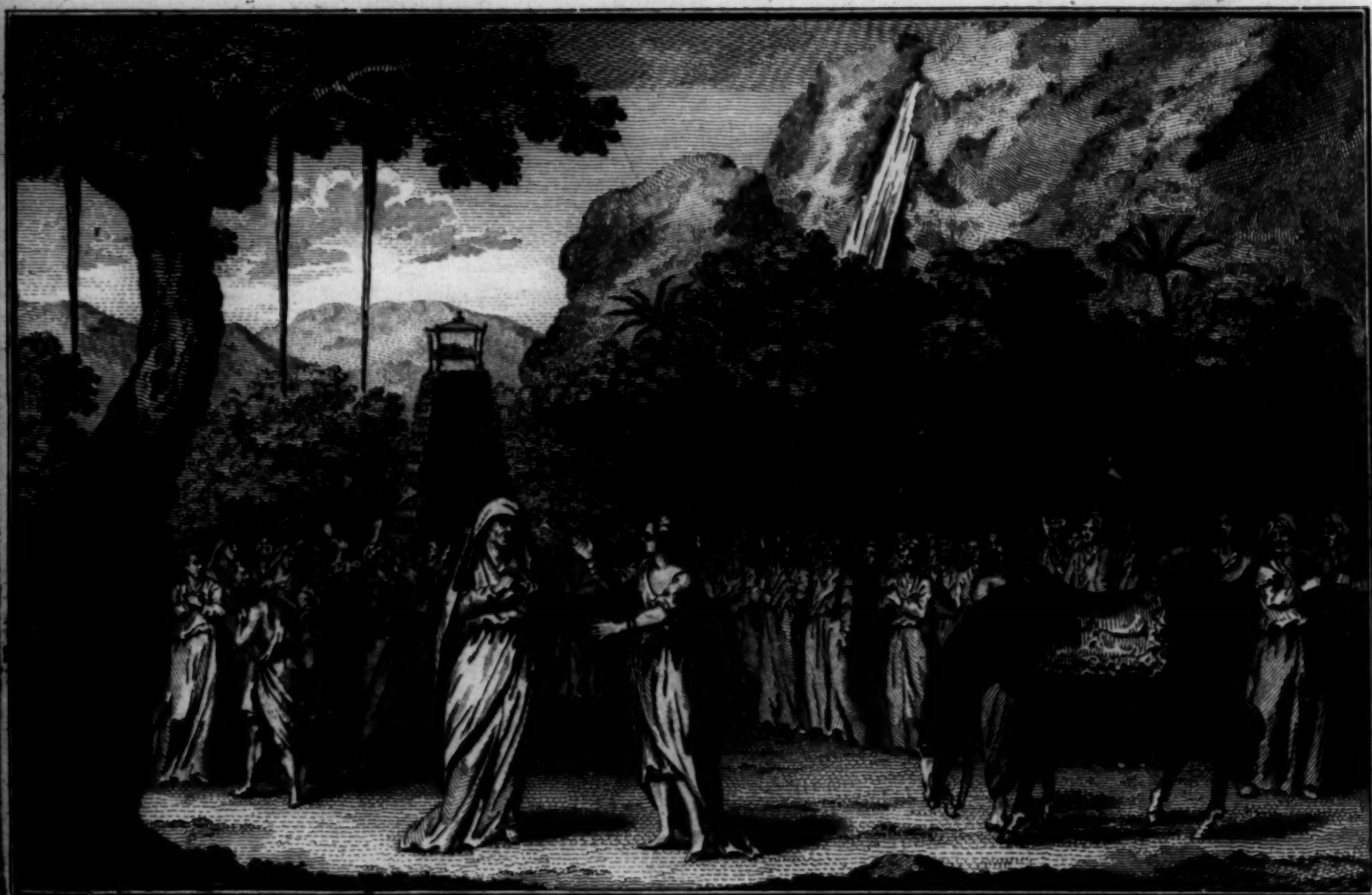
Your very obedient

and devoted Servant

For St George
18 January 1775

EYLES IRWIN



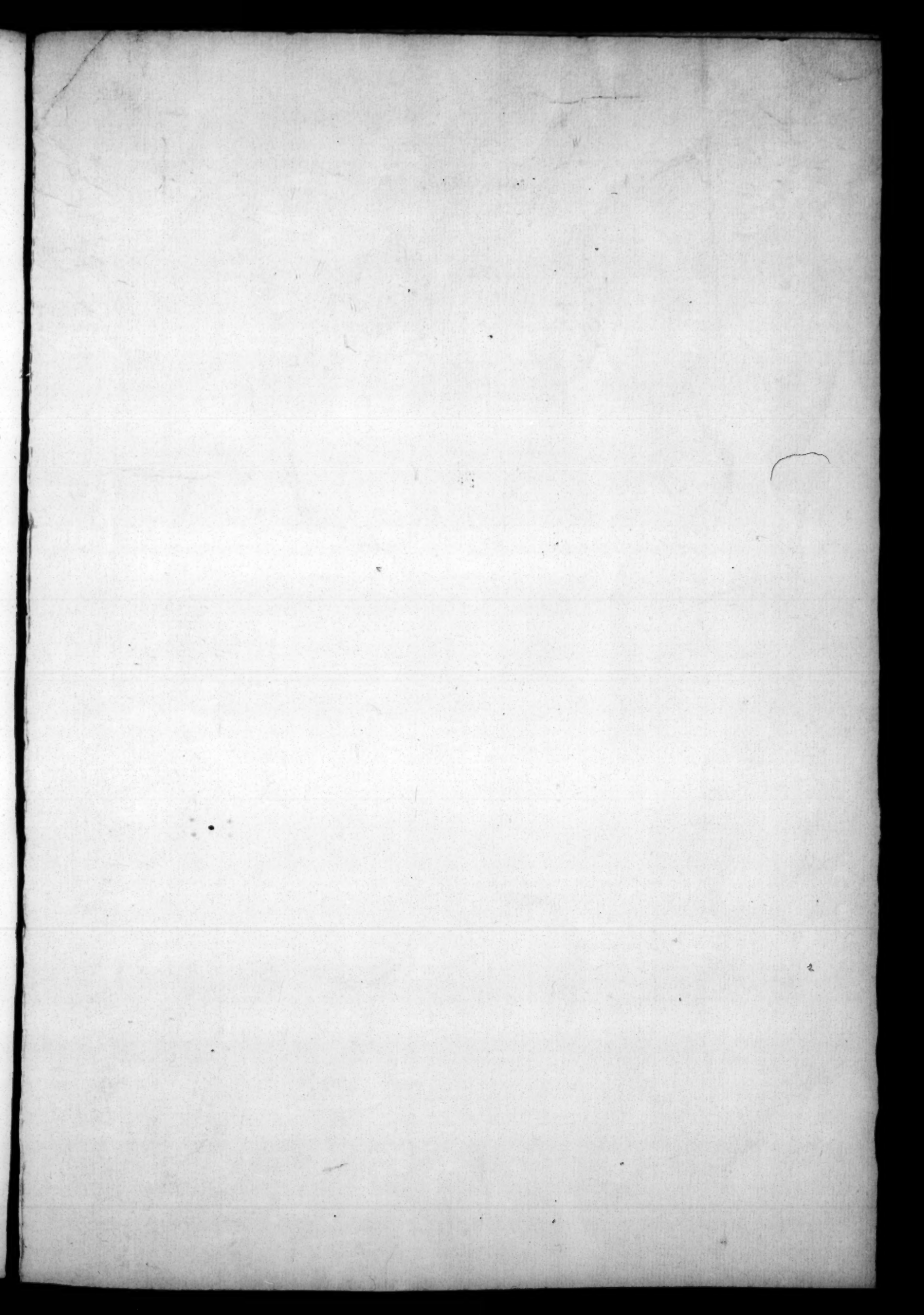


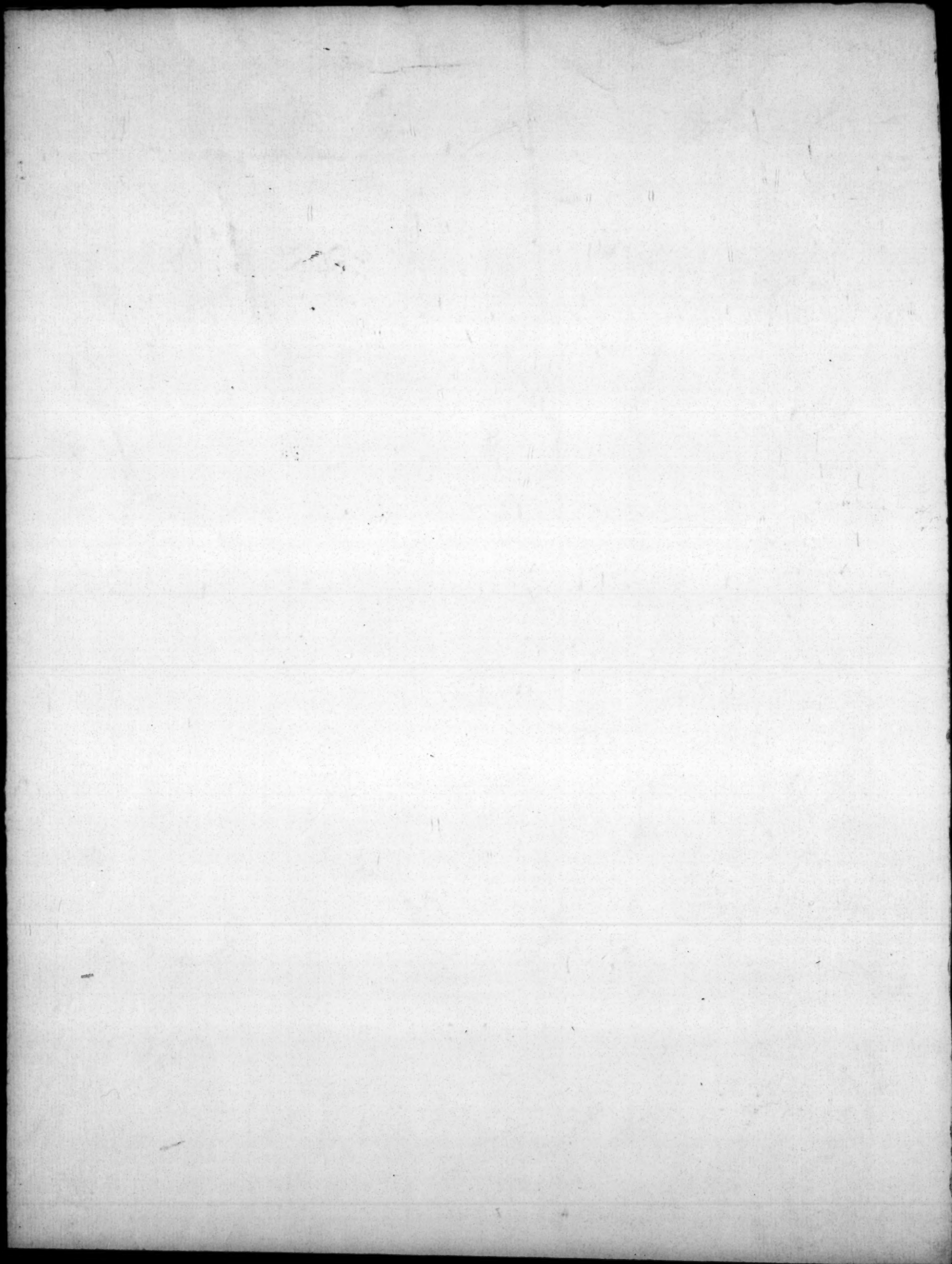
Ward. delin.

Collyer sculp.

Yes fondest object of my aching heart, & Lo' here she stands, her plighted faith to prove,
BEDUKAH joins thee, ne'er again to part: & Nor deems the sacrifice too great for Love.

Canto II. line 195.





B E D U K A H,
O R T H E
S E L F - D E V O T E D.

C A N T O I.

O F Eastern Virtue and Religion's force,
That spur the tardy Pagan to the course
Where Fame's the prize---O Muse prepare to sing,
Essay thy strength, and soar on eagle-wing.

But ere the Poet try the pathless way,
Beneath whose name appears his daring lay ?
On loftier genius wait the fav'ring Nine---
Content he bends at his inspirer's shrine.

B

O smile,

O smile, ELIZA ! for to thee is due

The verse that brings the nuptial faith to view. 10

Had, like the Pagan's breast, thine learnt to prove

The sad extremes of Bigotry and Love ;

Had, like the victim of these mournful strains,

This road been taught thee to the Elysian plains ;

Virtue on Death had made thee fearless smile ; 15

The Poet melted o'er thy fun'ral pile !

Now had the silver Regent of the night

Faded before Aurora's golden light ;

The darkling Screech-Owl's boding notes give way

To the Lark's song, that ushers in the day ; 20

The flighted Lover breaks his short repose,

From fancied bliss awakes to real woes ;

Not so the Hunter, who now seeks the fields

Where Health resides, and Sloth to Vigor yields :

Unbent with cares that vex the busy train, 25

Pleasure awaits him on the dewy plain,

Awhile suspended sleeps his ardent flame ---

The Hound sagacious opens on the Game ;

The Pack attentive join the deep'ning cry,
 While hills and vales and hollow woods reply ; 30
 In the full tide his heart is borne along,
 And the stung Courser feels the sounding thong.
 Unfung, unpitied die the hapless prey ;
 A nobler victim claims the plaintive lay :
 One, who to Death a willing sacrifice, 35
 The altar views with unrelenting eyes !

As near a rivulet's enamell'd fide,
 Where many a flow'ret drank the gushing tide ;
 Where the tall Tam'rind lent his ample shade,
 The joyous Pack a busy circle made ; 40
 LYCON, a youth who lov'd the vig'rous chace,
 The signal waits, to urge his courser's pace ;
 Fir'd by the sounds, the impulse to obey,
 Tho' torrents threat, and mountains bar his way.
 Yet not so rude, but Love had known his breast ; 45
 Thou, Friendship, too wert there a welcome guest :
 Alive to Rapture which from Beauty springs,
 In secret oft' he touch'd the tuneful strings :

Humble himself, he fear'd no witling's frown,
No smiles he coveted, no Bard's renown ; 50
Save when his LUCIA---crown'd an angel long !
Or thou, fair DELIA ! listen'd to his song.
Just when the doubling notes the game betray,
And in full chorus break the hounds away,
A hollow murmur fills the troubled air, 55
And calls his soul to pensiveness and care ;
To scenes more fitted sadness to inspire,
Than ever woke the animated lyre.

A grove there was of venerable pride,
From whose dark bosom shot the rapid tide ; 60
Thence winding as the stream its maze pursues,
LYCON, detain'd, a long procession views.
A troop of holy Bramins lead the way,
With blazing torches rivalling the day :
On they advance with solemn steps and flow, 65
That speak devotion, and betoken woe.
Next them the Drum and Trumpet take the place,
Sound the dead march, and regulate their pace.

Preceded by a band of weeping friends,
Aloft her courfe a beauteous female bends ; 70
An high-bred ſteed ſupports her lovely weight,
Who bows his creſt, as conſcious of her fate :
No more he heeds the warlike notes, the throng ---
But ſtalks in ſad ſolemnity along !
Not thou, fam'd DIDO ! canſt a rival prove 75
To her who death-devotes herſelf for love.
To perjur'd vows was ſacrific'd thy life ---
Here with her conſtant Huſband burns the Wife :
Thy tragic end was haſten'd by deſpair ;
But calm and ſteady dies this widow'd Fair. 80
Ah ! what ſenſations in his boſom riſe,
As this bright form encounters LYCON's eyes :
His heart forebodes ſome agonizing ſcene,
But yet conceives not what theſe wonders mean.
When to the right he views, yet undeſcry'd, 85
A lofty pyramid's capacious ſide :
Thither he goes --- at once the truth appears ;
The cruel cuſtom oft' had reach'd his ears :

A tear

A tear he drops, to virtuous error due !

And silent waits the melancholy view.

90

As they approach, on either side the train

Equal divide, and form a splendid lane.

Next to the pyre the Bramins take the place,

The rest in order fill the length'ning space.

The music stops --- deep stillness reigns around ---

95

In mute attention every voice is bound.

The croud, as stiffen'd by the hand of Death,

Motionless stand, and scarcely draw a breath.

On her each eye is fix'd with ardent gaze,

(On her who dearly purchases the praise)

100

Who now in prospect of the fatal goal,

Maintains her intrepidity of soul.

A vail as yet from view her face conceals,

But ev'ry motion majesty reveals.

And now (as custom wills) on either side

105

She scatters flow'rets, ravish'd in their pride :

Ravish'd, like her, untimely from their bed,

At morn but blowing, and ere ev'ning dead !

Quick

Quick at the sight, where'er she moves along

Her gifts provoke contention in the throng :

110

For Superstition deems them precious gains,

And happy he who but a stalk retains.

END OF THE FIRST CANTO.

BEDUKAH,

SELF-DEVOTED
OR THE
BEDUKAH,
SELF-DEVOTED.

CANTO II.

BRIGHT Phoebus now emerging from the main
Had shot his lustre o'er the crouded plain,
When young BEDUKAH (such the victim's name
Which here the Muse ambitious gives to fame)
Hapless arriving at her journey's end, 5
Does calmly graceful from her steed descend :
Slow to the pile she walks with conscious pride,
Then gently turning casts her vail aside.

O could

O could the Poet, like the Painter *, dare
 Conceal the aspect of his suff'ring Fair, 10
 As o'er ATRIDES' griefs a shade was thrown,
 BEDUKAH's beauties never had been known.
 But Truth and Innocence his art command,
 Inspire his fancy, and confirm his hand.
 From soul to soul then soft Amazement flew, 15
 And glisten'd ev'ry cheek with Pity's dew.
 Affecting sight ! for o'er her destin'd head
 Not fifteen years with downy wings had fled :
 Not fifteen years her eyes had view'd the light ;
 Those orbs now sinking to eternal night ! 20
 Her slender form was fraught with Beauty's pow'r ;
 But Beauty waiting her meridian hour.

* Timanthes, a celebrated Grecian painter. By one of those sudden thoughts which denote superior genius, he gained particular applause by his Sacrifice of Iphigenia : for, though the greatest master of his art, he attempted not to pourtray the features of Agamemnon ; but, throwing a veil over what he did not think it possible to do justice to, left the spectator to imagine the distraction of a father who was eye-witness to the violent death of a darling daughter.

In purest white her faultless limbs were drest,
A silver girdle, and a muslin vest :
One breast was slightly hid, one half-display'd, 25
Which, wild with youthful blood, luxuriant play'd.
Naked her arm, but where the bracelet shone,
Where lustre darted from each orient stone.
Her jetty locks with richest pearl were strung,
And from her nose a matchless diamond hung, 30
Clear as the crystal of her glossy eye,
And seeming with its brightest beams to vie.
Just to the knee her floating garment fell,
Which ill conceal'd the limb's harmonious swell ;
And still the wind, assisted by her pace, 35
Betray'd some beauty, and some latent grace.
With solemn gesture, and an aspect kind,
Which spoke a resolute yet tender mind,
She paid obeisance to th' attentive croud,
Then lowly to her weeping mother bow'd : 40
The mother trembling by her darling's side,
Flew to her bosom, and thus fondly cry'd :

“ Ah,

- “ Ah, lov'd BEDUKAH ! lov'd, alas, in vain !
- “ If from affection this my promis'd gain !
- “ This the reward of all my tender care, 45
- “ For Rapture, Anguish ! and for Hope, Despair !
- “ Was it for this with conscious pride I glow'd,
- “ And bashful bare about the pleasing load ?
- “ Was it for this that Hymen gaily smil'd,
- “ His torch a meteor that deceiv'd my child ! 50
- “ Curst be the hour thy beauties knew the light,
- “ But doubly curs'd the matrimonial rite.
- “ Would I had 'scap'd a mother's thankless pains,
- “ Or thou been deaf to Love's seducing strains.
- “ O vain repinings ! unavailing heat ! 55
- “ With motion scarce my feeble pulses beat ;
- “ My aged knees can scarce these limbs sustain,
- “ While sorrows weigh me to the dusty plain.
- “ Ah yet, BEDUKAH ! yet consent to live,
- “ And life and spirit to thy parent give. 60
- “ Canst thou behold her sinking to the grave,
- “ And not stretch out thy pitying hand to save ?

- “ Canst thou ? --- recall the sentence ere too late ;
“ On thy resolve depends my dubious fate :
“ Thy mother swears her fate is in thy pow’r, 65
“ Whether she live, or this her latest hour :
“ The moment dread that gives thee to the flame,
“ Devotes to ruin her decrepit frame :
“ If this the legacy thy love bequeath,
“ With thee united she will welcome death.--- 70
“ O blest event ! O change for ever dear !
“ Good bodes that sigh, and that repentant tear ;
“ BEDUKAH’S hand the trembling parent shields,
“ And all the Daughter to Affection yields !
“ Yes, yes, my love, far hence we will retire, 75
“ Far from this country, and this rav’nous pyre ;
“ Far from the place where this fell custom reigns,
“ Where Innocence is doom’d to fiery pains.
“ To some lone desert we will shape our way,
“ Leave men for savages more mild than they. 80
“ Then come, my child---nor friend nor foe will dare
“ To vent their malice, and pursue us there :

“ No

" No priest shall there to broach his mandates stand,
 " Nor Scandal hunt us thro' the dreary land.
 " Thy * Father too, whom Heav'n propitious send 85
 " Loaded with treasures to his journey's end,
 " With heart-felt rapture shall applaud the voice
 " Which sooth'd thy scruples, and made life thy choice.
 " He, with his fortunes, eagerly shall haste,
 " And snatch us from the horrors of the waste ; 90
 " To some new clime our weary feet remove,
 " And peace and joy in our endearments prove."

So said the Mourner, and had further said,
 But now her tongue to utterance is dead :
 Contending passions all her soul oppress, 95
 And now she hopes, and now she doubts success ;
 Till in despair she casts her eyes below,
 And groans, and looks a spectacle of woe.

Nor bare BEDŪKAH a less trying part,
 Her mother's words had deeply pierc'd her heart : 100

* The Gentoos are great merchants, and travel to all parts of the East ; which may account for the absence of our Heroine's father at such an interesting time.

The

The dread resolve of one she held so dear,
 Woke the keen pang, and forc'd the tender tear.
 But still, whate'er her sadden'd looks express,
 She rose superior as arose distress :
 With solemn grace her mother's hand she took, 105
 And thus address'd her with a soften'd look :

“ And lives the mother at whose breast I hung,
 “ To use in vain her supplicating tongue ?
 “ Am I so cruel and rebellious grown,
 “ To hear, unmov'd, her melancholy moan ? 110
 “ To soothe her sorrows with a fruitless tear,
 “ And in my purpose still to persevere !
 “ O ! shake this weakness from thy tender breast,
 “ Forget a wretch thy kindness should detest.
 “ Sooner the Tyger shall with pity glow, 115
 “ Rude Rocks be soften'd at the plaint of woe ;
 “ The Tempest cease, when houseless vagrants plead,
 “ Than stubborn Virtue from her path recede.
 “ Tho' Terror, Peril, Ruin bar the way,
 “ When Virtue calls, her votaries obey : 120

- " Obey with joy, as her decrees require,
 " To Hymen's altar, or the fun'ral pyre :
 " To the dear youth eternal truth to swear,
 " Or here to find a wish'd release from care ! ---
 " Yes, fondest object of my aching heart, 125
 " BEDUKAH joins thee, ne'er again to part :
 " Lo ! here she stands her plighted faith to prove,
 " Nor deems the sacrifice too great for Love.
 " O ! yet with-hold thy passage to the skies,
 " My soul in extacy with thine would rise : 130
 " One moment gives me to th' insatiate flame,
 " In Death unites us, and unites in fame ---
 " And thou, dear author of my life, adieu !
 " These streaming eyes must take their parting view :
 " On me no more shall smile that honour'd face, 135
 " These looks our last ! and this our last embrace !
 " Tho' nature pleads, and human weakness feels,
 " A voice divine my doom terrific seals.
 " Say, with what woes futurity is fraught,
 " (Cruel to speak, and horrible to thought !) 140
 " How

- “ How lost to hope ! how lost my honest name !
“ Should I consent to lead a life of shame.
“ An husband's fate should I refuse to share,
“ He to his bosom takes a kinder Fair :
“ False to my love, he falsehood shall requite, 145
“ And shun my steps in regions of delight.
“ If dark and dismal then the prospect there,
“ What here remains but horror and despair ?
“ Cast from the seat my former title gave,
“ The widow'd mistress must become the slave. 150
“ The mere idea worse than death appears ---
“ To barter Honour for a Length of years !
“ Escap'd from Calumny's resistless tide,
“ Allow some foreign clime my shame might hide ;
“ No solitude the sting of guilt disarms, 155
“ Nor lenient time, nor e'en a mother's arms.
“ And thou, whose love this abject step advis'd,
“ Couldst thou care for a coward so despis'd ?
“ Who could so low thro' fear of death descend,
“ And meanly live, to shun a glorious end ! 160
“ O !
- 19

“ O! let me die while to thy bosom dear,
“ Nor meet a Father’s brow and curse severe :
“ While youth and love and fame unspotted bloom;
“ Thro’ tort’ring flames BEDUKAH seeks the tomb.”

END OF THE SECOND CANTO.

D BEDUKAH,

B E D U K A H,
OR THE
S E L F - D E V O T E D.

C A N T O III.

AS thro' the crowd her melting accents steal,
 And eyes betray what tender bosoms feel,
 The honour'd stem from which she life deriv'd,
 Sinks to the ground, of every sense depriv'd.
 Long nature struggled in the Parent's breast, 5
 Till spent, she finds a momentary rest.
 Thrice happy were this timely sleep to last,
 Nor she awake to mem'ry of the past.

While

While now the priests her fainting frame sustain,

BEDUKAH pours this soul-distracting strain : 10

“ Ye sacred Bramins ! pious, just, and sage,

“ To Heav’n devoted, and inform’d by age ;

“ Whose guiltless lives no tongues profane impeach,

“ Who daily practise what your doctrines teach ;

“ If e’er at tales ye melted of distress, 15

“ Patient to hear, and eager to redress ;

“ If e’er compassion touch’d an human breast,

“ Attend ye to an earnest, last request.

“ To your decrees this cruel death I owe. ---

“ From my obedience what disasters flow ! 20

“ The dearest object to these closing eyes,

“ Pale, senseless, cold --- a prey to sorrow lies !

“ For pity’s sake, oh be it then your care

“ To soothe her griefs, and snatch her from despair :

“ From this sad prospect her removal speed, 25

“ Ere madness the return of life succeed :

“ Ere she awake to such a killing fight

“ As might the Bramin teach to curse the light.”

Here as the priests her filial charge obey,
The lovely suppliant turns her head away. 30

She turns --- and lo! amid the standers-by

The mournful LYCON draws her glancing eye.

His looks, that speak amazement and distress,

Her thoughts engage --- but chief his foreign dress :

Thro' custom still immur'd from public view, 35

By name she only of Europeans knew.

But now a new-born courage prompts her tongue,

(Perhaps from pride a sudden impulse sprung)

With mien elate she graceful waves her hand,

As if the youth's attention to command : 40

“ And thou” (she cries) “ whose footsteps hither bend

“ To make thee witness of BEDUKAH's end,

“ Tho' chance misled thee, stranger, yet remain,

“ And see a woman unsubdued by pain.

“ Thy pity at my wayward fate I view ; 45

“ The choice was mine --- no pity then is due.

“ Nor doubt nor fear BEDUKAH's steps deters ---

“ If right, she triumphs --- wrong, she greatly errs !

" O ! if her virtue then has touch'd thy heart,

" Her virtue's praise be worthy of thy art :

50

" To Christian wives a Pagan's death relate,

" And bid them envy, if not imitate."

So saying, she diffus'd a parting smile,

And sudden mov'd towards the fatal pile :

The fatal pile with flow'ry wreaths was crown'd,

55

That fragrance shed, and beauty cast around.

(Such wily charms Egyptian meads betray,

Where deadly asps and lurking vipers play)

By easy steps the fated height she gains,

Where rest in state her husband's lov'd remains :

60

Around the corpse she throws her eager arms,

His clay-cold lips with ardent kisses warms.

But nor a sigh she breathes, nor weak complaint ;

By Love inspir'd, she emulates the Saint.

What deeds ! what miracles does Love inspire !

65

For Love a tender female braves the fire,

Leaves the Philosopher of Death to preach,

To practise what no apathy could reach.

Nor long she waits a period to her woes,

The tragic scene is hastening to a close :

70

The

The signal comes ! (methinks I feel it here,
 Still shake my soul, and vibrate on my ear,)
 At once a thousand trumpets rend the air,
 A thousand voices loud accordance bear :
 In Babel's tower not greater tumult rung, 75
 When strange confusion jarr'd from tongue to tongue.
 The signal's giv'n ! --- quick to the altar's side
 A thousand torches are at once applied :
 At once the pile appears a gen'ral blaze ---
 Black clouds of smoke obscure bright Phoebus' rays : 80
 The priests with fragrant oil still feed the flame,
 Whose darksome round conceals the martyr'd dame.
 O ! of this curtain let the Muse avail,
 Nor paint the sequel of the horrid tale.
 Enough of female faith is brought to light, 85
 Esteem, regard, and pity to excite.
 The * Sage whose death Athenian annals stains,
 And † he whose life warm-issued thro' his veins,

* Socrates, who being envied for his great talents, was accused by his countrymen of contempt towards their Gods, and unjustly condemned to die by poison.

† Seneca, whose veins were opened in a bath, by order of the tyrant Nero, when he found that the poison he had administered to the instructor of his youth had failed of its intended effect !

Yield her the palm --- tho' firmness mark'd their end,

What heroism can with this contend ? 90

Now to their dwellings had dispers'd the throng---

While many a foot pac'd heavily along,

Each from the tragic scene some moral drew ---

The Mother warn'd her Daughter to be true ;

While the fond Bridegroom by his Charmer's side 95

Wept but to think her courage might be tried !

When LYCON waking from a thoughtful vein,

Desponding views the solitary plain.

BEDUKAH's words still trembling in his ear,

To the sad spot he draws with rev'rence near, 100

Where late inspir'd she pour'd her parting strain,

Where her dumb ashes only now remain.

He marks the relics with dejected eyes,

And deeply sighing thus impassion'd cries :

" Yes, brightest pattern of connubial truth ! 105

" Not unobserv'd was sacrific'd thy youth ;

" Not ineffectual was thy fond request,

" Nor idly utter'd to a senseless breast.

- " The Muse for thee her softest lyre shall string,
 " Of thy hard fate in mournful numbers sing. 110
 " And tho' with some thy constancy may fail,
 " Who wonder virtue can so far prevail;
 " Who deaf to the bewitching voice of fame,
 " Live for themselves, nor know an higher aim;
 " Yet to the Good those suff'rings shall be dear, 115
 " Which their ELIZA graces with a tear:
 " Yet with the Gentle shall thy merits plead,
 " Which thus to her protection are decreed;
 " If she approve, the sympathetic lay
 " Shall sooth the Serious, melt the thoughtless Gay; 120
 " That Death can lovely seem confirm the Brave,
 " When Honour crowns their union with the Grave."



F I N I S.

